

QALAM INSTITUTE

Seerah: Life of the Prophet

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Introduction – Part 1

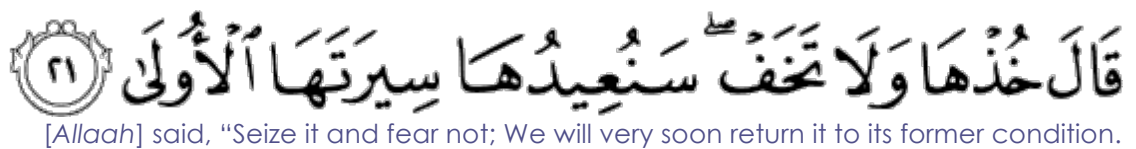
To begin, we will discuss – as scholars have for eras – by providing an introduction about this science and this study and what basic principles must be kept in mind when approaching this study.

What is Seerah?

Linguistically, it means a path where somebody walks, a direction someone takes. Maseer is walking.

Figuratively, it is used to mean a person's life. The life someone has walked or traversed. The direction in which someone has lead his life.

It is used in its linguistic meaning in *Surah Ta-Ha* (20, 21) where *Allaah* the Most High says to Musa 'alayhi as-salaam:



Thus, the way you are, your condition, the way you live life, and even your physical form makes up your *seerah*.

The word is very interestingly a literary term. What we call “biography”, literally translates to *seerah*.

Seerah shakhsyah → The biography of someone

Seerah dhatyah → Autobiography

We are specifically discussing *Seerat an-Nabawiyah* (Prophetic biography). This is defined by the scholars as everything that has been related to us from all of the occurrences from the life of the Prophet. Some of the previous scholars would refer it to as that from his *sunnan* and daily practices. All of his characteristics (physical and mannerisms) are part of his *seerah*. All of his campaigns, expeditions, military endeavours, family life, home life – all of it are included. If we look back to early compilations, they would be referred to as *maghaazi* (e.g. of al-Bukhaari) or *al-ghazayah* (e.g. of al-Waaqidi).

- *Ghazwa* (pl. *ghazayah*): military expedition

Why study Seerah?

This includes the *mawdu'* (subject matter) of the *seerah*. In the case of *seerat an-nabawiyah* it is obviously the life of the Messenger of *Allaah* ﷺ.

We will present this with a few basic preconceived notions in mind.

The study of *seerah* goes hand-in-hand with the study of the Book of *Allaah*. Thus, it has been around from day one. Most people have come across *seerah* in some capacity or another in their life. There are some commonalities between all of us who have been presented with this study. And they are as follow.

It has been studied in the form of books (e.g. text books) in some level of school education or even manuals read later in life. Usually, these are

- a. A dry study of facts, names, places, and dates. A collection of facts in a timeline.
- b. A story delivery. Traditionally story of *seerah* was performed in a flowing narrative. Yet, it was only a narrative. It was almost relegated as a fairy tale and it seemed unrelated to our lives. It may captivate us as entertainment, but what relevance does it have to our lives afterwards?

Both the facts and narrative are important, but they must be accompanied with practicality and relevance.

We are being asked to put aside any baggage we may have about *seerah*. This will *in shaa Allaah* be at a whole different level than anything we have previously experienced.

Now, why should we study the *seerah*?

1. **Allaah recommends us to study His Messenger's ﷺ life.** The *Qur'aan* is the instruction from *Allaah*. When we look there and observe the *aayaat* where *Allaah* directs us towards the life of His Messenger ﷺ and studying his life. *Allaah* the Most High says (33, 21):

لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِّمَن كَانَ يَرْجُوا اللَّهَ وَالْيَوْمَ
الْآخِرَ وَذَكَرَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا ﴿٢١﴾

There has certainly been for you in the Messenger of *Allaah* an excellent pattern for anyone whose hope is in *Allaah* and in the Last Day and [who] remembers *Allaah* often.

This verse begins with two levels of emphasis (*laam* and *qad*).

Kaana | Word Analysis

We could grammatically make the argument that the *kaana* is unnecessary in this verse. But, the speech of *Allaah* is perfect and never superfluous so the *kaana* serves a purpose. It is there for emphasis and it gives the meaning of persistence. It tells us that this message is consistent, continual, eternal. So consistently, without any exception and for all times, there is exclusively for you within the Messenger of *Allaah* ﷺ the ultimate, perfect, most perfect, role-model. That is the only role-model of this caliber we will ever find.

Fi | Word Analysis

Inside of, in the Messenger of *Allaah* ﷺ there is the best exemplar for us. We will find the best exemplar for ourselves when we completely and thoroughly immerse ourselves in to the study of his ﷺ life. We must put ourselves in his ﷺ shoes, trying to live his life as he ﷺ lived it day-by-day, event-by-event, occurrence-by-occurrence. We must do this at least conceptually. Then and only then, will we realize how great of an example he ﷺ is for us.

When we take a snapshot of the life of the Messenger of *Allaah* ﷺ (e.g. looking at few events or few *ahadith*), which is not like truly understanding his ﷺ experience. We must have a full understanding of what came blow-by-blow.

Also notice that *uswatun Hassanat* is in the nominal form. This means that these characteristics are with the Messenger of *Allaah* ﷺ forever. They are not restricted by time.

2. **It will humanize the Messenger of Allaah's ﷺ life.** When we know certain facts or *ahadith*, it becomes very technical. It is beneficial, but it is not humanized. The common, average Muslim (especially youth and converts and reverts – the demographics in our community who are still

fresh and still learning and absorbing what most have already absorbed) when asked about the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ do not feel like they have a lot in common. In fact, they do not even feel like he ﷺ was human. With the proliferation of comic books and superheroes and all of these supernatural and lore, have people reconciling how someone is superior to them. For example, Superman was from Krypton – nobody else will ever be from Krypton. Spiderman was bitten by a spider – nobody else can ever be Spiderman. This is something our youth are very comfortable with. Adults need to understand that when children are say four years old and are watching these characters, they become ingrained in their psyche. It makes it easier for them to reconcile something inconceivable. Youth often consider then that the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ was this amazing, charitable, and kind because he ﷺ was like Superman – he was from a different planet, he was not human. That is what is going through their heads. They do not doubt that he ﷺ was that awesome. They just consider that he ﷺ was unlike them. They cannot relate to him ﷺ.

We confuse two issues. Yes, there should of course be respect and reverence for the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ, but he ﷺ should not become so distant to us that we feel no connection or relationship for us. We should not see him ﷺ as someone we read about and are awed regarding.

When we study the *seerah* – his life and how he ﷺ lived moment of sadness by moment of happiness – we humanize him ﷺ.

Sidenote

There are few terminologies we confuse. They have some overlap, but they are distinctly different.

Hadith refers to actual narrations and traditions of the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ. Including what he ﷺ said, what he ﷺ did, and what he ﷺ approved of. These are narrations about him ﷺ.

These are primarily very technical quotations and excerpts from his life. Thus, they are often presented without the context. They are meant to be done in this way because they are a technical tool and resource. The *muhadithun* qualify and verify the *ahadith* and the *fuqaha* take and extrapolate rulings from there.

The majority of our community is only exposed to the life of the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ by way of technical *ahadith*. Some of these traditions do include how he ﷺ spoke and his mannerisms, but it is only an excerpt. It again contributes to the dehumanization.

Hadith has its role, but it should never be studied in absence of *seerah*. ANJ would even go as far as to say that everybody needs to be aware and familiar with *ahadith*, but we should never make exclusions. The healthy Muslim is the one who has an element of every science of Islam in his life. If all we do is obsess over *fiqh* and do not even study *Qur'aan*, then there is a problem. There should be a healthy dose of every field of study so that we can grow in each.

If a Muslim must make a preference:

Traditionally, *seerah* was the science given preference for study. The study of the past was very much in depth. Imaam al-Bukhaari's *rahimahu Allaah* life was *Sahih al-Bukhaari*.

Think about it. A man devoted his entire life to 6000 *ahadith*. That's very little, but it was in much detail.

In reality, the study of *seerah* was universal. It was meant for all demographics of the Muslim community – regardless of access to scholarship.

The third term is *sunnah*. It is a very subjective and flexible word. Its meaning varies depending upon the context it is used. The *seerah* is part of the *sunnah*. Everything related to the life, the personality, the existence of the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ is included in the *sunnah*. It includes *hadith* and *seerah*.

In the arena of theology, *sunnah* is the antonym of *bid'ah* (innovation).

In the area of *fiqh*, *sunnah* is another category from *fard* or *waajib*.

If you are discussing sources, it is the counterpart or companion of the *Qur'aan*.

The point is that *sunnah* has its place and it is a terminology varying on its area of use. The same is for *hadith* and *seerah*.

The place of *seerah* is to humanize the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ. To make the common, average person feel a connection and relationship with the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ.

3. **To extract lessons.** Studying the *seerah* allows us to extract lessons and make it relevant and practical to our own lives. This is for every demographic of our community and our own conditions as individuals, families, and communities.

Sidenote

What do we take from the *seerah* by virtue of lessons and practical application?

Studying the *seerah* is a practical guide on how to live our own lives.

When we look in books of *seerah* we will find that the Makkan era is oftentimes presented more briefly than the Madinan period. That has been the focus and interest of most of society. In reality, however, the Makkan period of Prophethood was 13 years while the Madinan period was 10 years. So why is there more breadth in the Madinan period for sample *seerah* books?

There are a few things to take into consideration. This needs to be presented.

1. There is more narrated about the Madinan period than the Makkan period because there were more Muslims at that time. Also, the life and practice and the message of the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ was more open in the Madinan period. (Remember, the first three years of Makkan Prophethood was very private and secret because of the danger of oppression).
2. The Madinan period seems to be very eventful with regards to expeditions.
3. *Hadith* has a different level of criteria than *seerah*. This is because the *muhadithun* know their material will be used by the *fuqaha* to make the legal system by which we judge. The *seerah*, however, may merely be to provide emotional consolation. Look at the fact that the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ lost a family member, his son, and he ﷺ felt pain. A person will know that his Messenger ﷺ lost a family member, he ﷺ felt pain and awoke the next day to continue and keep going. He will be able to relate and feel that he can strive similarly. It's emotional. The same filters that are in

place to critique *hadith* are not needed at this point for the seerah.

Nevertheless, a lot of the seerah was filtered out based upon these critiques and for this reason we have deprived ourselves from the information and experiences of the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ during the Makkan era. If we do not know his ﷺ social context, we do not know life as he ﷺ knew it – we need to know Makkah. We need to know the situation even before prophethood so that we can extract practicality and wisdoms.

4. **Authenticity of the sunnah.** This is a contemporary problem. It has been a fringe discussion for ~1200 years of our history. Mainstream Muslims were never affected by nor concerned by it. Today, even the common, average Muslim is thinking about this and more scary confused about this. What is the role of the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ in the religion? Is his ﷺ *sunnah* authoritative or not? Is it true or not? If you do not think about this, you will at least know of someone who is thinking about it. So where is the solution? Muslim scholarship has tried to tackle this issue academically and intellectually. General facts that you may find helpful are:
 - a. The system put forward for preserving the *sunnah* is one of the most academically rigorous system.
 - b. Allaah has promised and sworn to protect His speech. In His speech, He is telling us to follow His Messenger ﷺ! Thus, Allaah would guarantee that the practice of the Messenger ﷺ would be protected and preserved.
 - c. The *Qur'aan* has been preserved, but even it has come to us through a system. How would we otherwise know how the letters are pronounced? That same system of preserving narrators of the *Qur'aan* is used to preserve the *ahadith*.

The reason people have a problem with *ahadith* and the *sunnah*, however, is not academic. It is primarily a spiritual issue. We are told to love the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ. What makes us want to obey him, study him and his life, and follow his practice is our love for him ﷺ. We cannot have love for him unless we know who he was, how he lived his life, what he did for us.

Learning about someone leads to familiarity. Becoming familiar with someone leads to developing love for that person. That is the natural process of becoming in love with any person. That is how the human heart works. That is the human condition.

As an *ummah*, 200-300 years ago we began to drift from learning about him ﷺ and learning about him. It was a regression. So the solution is to learn about him so that we may be able to develop our love for him ﷺ.

When we start to learn about him ﷺ, we will naturally be able to love him ﷺ. We won't be able to help ourselves, but to love him ﷺ! Once we learn his life, we will not have any questions about his authority. None whatsoever.

ANJ had a personal interaction with someone. When ANJ was a student, a very intelligent community member who came from a very traditional home, developed a zeal to learn the *Qur'aan*. Along the way, he came across some resources that instilled in his mind skepticism with regards to *ahadith*. It grew within him to the point that it reached full-blown confusion. He had a few discussions with ANJ that were almost like debates. One day, ANJ was visiting him during *Ramadhān* before returning overseas. He said, "Forget about everything. Give it to me. The bottomline. Is *hadith* something we are supposed to believe in it or not?" He expressed more confusion than hate towards *ahadith*.

ANJ responded, "Forget about that. I don't even want to talk about it anymore. When was the last time you read a book on *seerah*?" He said, "I can't even remember when. At least a few years."

As he was leaving, ANJ said, "I'll come back tomorrow." He went to the bookstore and found whatever books he could on *seerah* and returned to his office. ANJ gave the books to the man and said, "This is a gift from me to you. I just want you to promise me one thing: you are going to read these." He was a very studious person so he would actually read them thoroughly. ANJ also recommended to him a few more titles that he should get hold of.

ANJ came back ten months later. A few days later, he went to visit the man. On his shelf, he saw the books of *seerah* and three or four others. Note, when this man would read he would study. There would be notes in his book and you could tell they have been through a rough patch.

ANJ asked him, "How's it going? How were the books?" The man replied, "Problem solved." "What do you mean 'problem solved'? I'm asking you about the books." He repeated himself, "Problem solved." ANJ asked, "You don't have any more questions about *hadith* and whether or not we need to believe in them or not?"

"Nope, no questions. I read the books you gave me at least three times each. Then, I ordered three more books of *seerah* and I read those three times each. This entire all I have done is read *seerah*. At the end of it I reached a conclusion. I have so much love for this man, I can't even say it. I don't even know how to put into words how much I love this man and how much he did for me and how much his life means to me and how much I can benefit from his life."

After that moment on, this same person would be sharing the *ahadith* after prayer on days that ANJ would be absent. It only took reading the *seerah* to get him to develop that love for the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ. That is the benefit of studying the *seerah*.

May Allaah the Exalted and Most High give us reality of everything that we have said and heard and may He give us true love of the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ.

Introduction – Part II

The bulk of the last session was “Why study the Prophetic Biography?”. We continue that here.

5. **It is a direct aid in understanding the Qur’aan.** There are several cliché analogies to understand this wisdom.

For example, an instruction manual for technology. The human being is the most remarkable creation of *Allaah*. It is so remarkable that *Allaah* tells us to ponder upon our ourselves as a clear and inevitable sign. Now, *Allaah* has provided us with an instruction manual on how to lead our lives. That was the *Qur’aan*. Yet, we are so remarkable that we require a person to actually come and demonstrate the installation and use of the product for us. That is the example of the life of the Messenger of *Allaah* ﷺ. He ﷺ was sent to bring the *Qur’aan* to life. When one of his wives ʿAishah ʿAishah was asked about his daily conduct, she would say, “His conduct, his entire existence, his entire being was a living, breathing, walking, talking *Qur’aan*.”

The scholars write that it is a tradition of the early scholars and pious predecessors that they would read and study the *seerah* and then teach it. We are in recovery and restoration mode. We need to get back to that attachment to the *seerah*. Currently, there have been great efforts – after the blessings of *Allaah* – in reconnecting with the Book of *Allaah*. But there is a second part. We need to preserve the integrity of the *ummah*. That comes through a deep profound understanding of who the Messenger of *Allaah* ﷺ was and extraction of practical lessons for our lives – for here, now, and today. We will find the treasures of how to be the best son/daughter, father/mother, husband/wife, community member, and human being.

The Messenger of *Allaah* ﷺ told us that he has left us upon the most clearest of proofs and evidences – on a solid footing. He ﷺ has left all of us upon or left among us two great things. He ﷺ guarantees with emphasis that we will never go astray as long as we continue to firmly latch on to these two sources. They are the Book of *Allaah* and the *sunnah* of His Messenger ﷺ.

6. **It is a tool to learn about day-to-day interactions.** You are able to observe the Messenger of *Allaah* ﷺ as he interacts with Muslims, non-Muslims, youth, women, etc. These are interactions we have in our day-to-day lives.

How prevalent of an issue is addressing the youth? The Messenger of *Allaah* ﷺ was what we would consider today an elder in a community – he ﷺ was 40 years old when he received prophecy. Many of the early followers of Islam were young people. They were the people on the front lines of spreading the message. The man who was probably responsible for delivering the message to the entire city of Madinah was probably only 18 years old – Mus’ab ibn ‘Umayr ʿUmayr. We need to understand that these young individuals were

Look even to the gender issue! In every community we wonder how far do we go. How far is too far? In the fraternity of community leaders, that is something they constantly grapple with. ANJ is among the many who is constantly surrounded by women he cares about and he wants them to be strong community members.

Even the demographics of interacting with non-Muslims and family. After the matters of faith and spirituality, the greatest concern we have is family. Nobody was busier than the Messenger of *Allaah* ﷺ. Yet, he ﷺ took out time for his family and tended to his household. By his own convictions and by the testimonies of people at that time, he ﷺ was the best husband, cousin,

father, grandfather that can be known. When we read the seerah it is as if we are observing these interactions.

As a teacher, he ﷺ was the best there could be! He ﷺ was sent as a teacher first and foremost. We can learn from him how to be a teacher.

7. (This point has hooked ANJ.) **No single human being's life has been documented like that of the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ.** It is remarkable the amount of detail and consideration that has been given to this biography. There is so much intricacy.

The *Shamaa'il Muhammadiyah* of Imaam at-Tirmidhi *rahimahu Allaah* is the primary compilation of the being of the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ. It describes his skin as neither dark nor light, but medium. It describes the symmetry of his face as broad and welcoming; not like it was round or large, but open and pleasant to gaze upon. It describes his forehead as being slightly larger and open. It describes his eyes – his pupils were very dark as if black in colour. It continues to describe nearly everything about him. In describing his physical appearance it describes his character and how he ﷺ spent his time.

The Messenger of Allaah ﷺ was always grieving. About what? About the condition of people. He ﷺ was always in thought about how to help people. He ﷺ never had a moment's rest. He ﷺ was always busy with something. For long periods of time he would be very quiet and serene; calm to be around. He ﷺ would not speak unnecessarily. It continues to describe him and his conduct and how he would speak to people. When he would speak with people, he would completely turn his body to speak with them. The narration describes the positioning when he was sitting; look at how difficult it is to maneuver our bodies when we are sitting. He ﷺ would never point at people; he would gesture at them with his whole hand. He ﷺ was always the first one to say *salaam*. If he ﷺ had to speak with someone across a room, he would not shout across the room; it's degrading, demeaning. Instead, he ﷺ would walk across the room, touch the person on the shoulder and then speak with them face-to-face in a pleasant tone. He ﷺ would introduce himself to people when he would meet them, then he would get to business. Everything about him has been preserved. That in and of itself is remarkable and is an experience.

8. **Universality of the Prophethood of Muhammad ibn 'Abdu Allaah ﷺ.** Allaah the Most High says (34, 28):

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا كَافَّةً لِّلنَّاسِ بَشِيرًا وَنَذِيرًا وَلَٰكِنَّ
أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

And We have not sent you except comprehensively to humankind as a bringer of glad tidings and a warner. But most of the people do not know.

In another place, Allaah actually commands His Messenger ﷺ (7, 158):

قُلْ يَأَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنِّي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ إِلَيْكُمْ جَمِيعًا الَّذِي لَهُ
 مَلِكُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ يَحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ فَآمِنُوا
 بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ النَّبِيِّ الْأُمِّيِّ الَّذِي يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَكَلِمَتِهِ
 وَاتَّبِعُوهُ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ ﴿١٥٨﴾

Say, [O Muhammad], "O humankind, indeed I am the Messenger of Allaah to you all, [from Him] to Whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth. There is no deity except Him; He gives life and causes death." So believe in Allaah and His Messenger, the unlettered prophet, who believes in Allaah and His words, and follow him that you may be guided.

In another place, Allaah the Exalted says (21, 107):

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٠٧﴾

And We have not sent you, [O Muhammad], except as a mercy to the worlds.

'Aalamin | Word Analysis

It specifically refers to a people wherever and whenever they existed. It is any and all demographics. Sometimes a "world" is considered a particular people at a particular time. In this case, however, it does not matter who the people were, where they are, and when they are. Every demographic is encompassed within this statement.

Here comes the existing point. Part of the gift and a miracle of the messengership of the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ as mentioned in his *Shamaa'il* is that he ﷺ would speak with brief, comprehensive, profound words.

"I have been given this gift of *jawami'ul-kalim*".

One of the most beautiful compilations of *jawami'ul-kalim* that ANJ has come across is the *Arba'ain* of Shah Waliullah Dihlawi rahimahu Allaah. They are two-three word *ahadith*, but so much can be drawn from them.

The scholars say part of the miracle of the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ was that he could say so much in so little,
 Allaah tells us that (10, 47):

وَلِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَسُولٌ فَإِذَا جَاءَ رَسُولُهُمْ قُضِيَ بَيْنَهُم بِالْقِسْطِ
وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ ﴿٤٧﴾

And for every nation is a messenger. So when their messenger comes, it will be judged between them in justice and they will not be wronged.

Allaah also says (13, 7):

وَيَقُولُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَوْلَا نُزِّلَ عَلَيْهِ آيَةٌ مِنْ رَبِّهِ ۚ إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ مُنْذِرٌ
وَلِكُلِّ قَوْمٍ هَادٍ ﴿٧﴾

And those who disbelieved say, "Why has a sign not been sent down to him from his Lord?" You are only a warned and for every people is a guide.

Allaah the Most High further specifies this to the people and the specific messenger they were sent. It is as if every people in every time and every era was spent a specific role-model, mentor, exemplar, a teacher. The Messenger of Allaah ﷺ, however, just like his words encompassed so much his being itself encompassed all of the people.

There is a narration in *Musnad Ahmad* that mentions there were 124 000 prophets sent and from among them were 315 messengers and this is not a small amount. Yet, still the life of one man was the ultimate example for them all. It has been 1400 years – that is 25+ generations of people being influenced by this life.

9. (ANJ has been considering this for quite some time.) **Recovery and tarbiyah of the community.** Like a PC, for the recovery of an *ummah* there is a safe mode. The vast majority of our *ummah* is in a crisis. We are remarkably in the safe mode. These are crises of spirituality, faith, and identity. When we look to the *seerah* we see the example of how to conduct ourselves in this mode.

Allaah the Most High tells His Messenger ﷺ (36, 6):

لِنُنْذِرَ قَوْمًا مَّا أُنْذِرَ آبَاؤَهُمْ فَهُمْ غَافِلُونَ ﴿٦﴾

That you may warn a people whose forefathers were not warned, so (as a direct result) they are unaware (apathetic).

We will have to work hard and diligently and keep our head up high.

In *Juz Tabarak*, early revelation, there are not deep theological specificities or judicial rulings. It is not even addressing the basic needs we have right now. It was talking about basics. It was just establishing the foundation!

The scholars use two words:

- 1) *ta'lim* – thorough education
- 2) *tarbiyah* – establishment of Muslim identity, a bringing of the *ummah* back up to par where they can be educated

The same two tools are used for both of these areas:

- 1) basic understanding of the *Qur'aan* – *imaan* 101
 - a. that *Allaah* is communicating with that person
 - b. that *Allaah* loves that person
 - c. that *Allaah* will forgive that person
 - d. that *Allaah* has prepared Paradise for that person
 - e. that there are consequences for our actions
- 2) *seerah* of the Messenger of *Allaah* ﷺ – to find a role model that will not disappoint them

Therefore, studying the *seerah* is an established tradition throughout Muslim history and we must embark upon it.

How has *seerah* been compiled?

Many of the fundamental basic sciences began as oral transmissions. The written compilation did not arise until 150-200 years after the death of the Messenger of *Allaah* ﷺ. There are isolated examples of thing being written down, but it was predominantly an oral transmission. Even though writing is a tool of learning and the pen has been dignified in the *Qur'aan*, it was not the form of transmission in the early days. The Messenger of *Allaah* ﷺ even said,

“Trap knowledge by writing it down.”

Nevertheless, reliance upon written work and a complete abandoning of oral transmission and memorization of these traditions arose because of the laziness developing in the *ummah*. We became unorganized with our time and lazy intellectually.

Some of the early compilations were by Urwah b. Zubayr, Wahn b. Munabbah, Ibn Shihab az-Zuhri, Musa b. Uqbah, Muhammad b. Ishaq – these were some of the students of the *tabi'un*. Later on, these were almost inherited and passed on to Hammam b. Munabbah (a student of Abu Hurayrah) and al-Makhzumi. Ibn Ishaq had a famous student by the name of Ibn Hisham and his *seerah* is famous to this day. At-Tabari and al-Bayhaqi were the fourth and fifth generations of scholars and they penned the compilations in detail.

Then, there were Ibn al-Jawzi, Ibn'l-Qayyim (*Zad al-Ma'ad*), Qadhi Iyyad (*ash-Shifaa*), Zayd-ud-din al-Iraqi, al-Qastalaani, etc. At-Tabari and Ibn Kathir compile histories of humanity and the bulk of them were *seerah*. *Rahimahum Allaah*.

Then we have contemporary works by several of the Nadawi scholars, Pickthall, Nomani, Mubarakpuri, Lings, etc. There are many books we can find. There is a lot of material. In terms of *tafsir* there is a legitimate complaint about there not being material readily available in English. For *seerah*, however, there is so much material because it is so captivating and engaging. They have been written by men and women, young and old, Muslims and non-Muslims all because the Messenger of *Allaah* ﷺ was such a captivating individual and he ﷺ attracted people from across the spectrum. There really is no excuse for us to learn from them.

How will this study of seerah be conducted?

ANJ will be taking a few resources into consideration.

- *Seerah* of Ibn Ishaq
- *Ash-Shifaa* of Qadhi Iyyad
- *Zad al-Ma'ad* of Ibn'l-Qayyim
- *Al-Bidayah wa'l-Nihayah* of Ibn Kathir
- *Muhammad* by Martin Lings

Some of the contemporary scholars have also looked to extract *fiqh'l-seerah*. For these ANJ will be using Muhammad al-Ghazaali's *rahimahu Allaah* work.

We may follow along with *The Sealed Nectar* for facts (dates, names, places).

There will be specific sessions regarding the specific interactions of the Messenger of *Allaah* ﷺ.

Sometimes to change the monotony of weekly sessions, we will have a special session. For example, specifically discussing the Messenger of *Allaah* ﷺ and how he conducted himself with youth, his leadership, as a teacher, etc.

To understand the miracle of the Messenger of *Allaah*'s ﷺ messengership we must analyze not just the time of revelation, but also the time in which he ﷺ was born. What that society was like. This will allow us to better appreciate the revolution and change that he ﷺ brought.

Conclusion

The Messenger of *Allaah* ﷺ was the Seal of Prophets. He ﷺ was the most perfect and noble of all of *Allaah*'s creations. He ﷺ was the *habib* (beloved) of *Allaah*.

The scholars refer to the Messenger of *Allaah* ﷺ as the "Crowning Jewel of Humanity". He is named Ahmad and Muhammad. He ﷺ is referred to as Mustafa and Abu'l-Qasim. As his names, Muhammad and Ahmad etymologically refer back to, no human being has ever been praised or mentioned or lauded as much as he is to this day and for days to come.

He ﷺ is the most perfect slave of *Allaah*. He ﷺ is the one chosen by *Allaah*. He was both the Prophet and Messenger of *Allaah*. He ﷺ was also the friend of *Allaah*. And he ﷺ was the mercy for all of the creation of *Allaah*.

May *Allaah* make this a means of mercy for us and may *Allaah* grant us the ability to emulate and model ourselves after the most perfect example of Muhammad ﷺ.

Pre-Islamic Society – Part I

If we are to understand and extract practical lessons from the life of the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ we need to understand the circumstances and situations of his time. This will help us better understand who the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ was, what he ﷺ was able to accomplish and the lasting legacy he left behind.

There is a Persian couplet that may be roughly translated as follows:

The rose truly shows its beauty when it sits among thorns.

The life of the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ is such a miracle in and of itself and it can truly be appreciated once we comprehend the situation at the time of his life.

Today's session will be dedicated to understanding Arabic; Pre-Islamic Arabic. This is from the tradition of scholarship. We know that the land, those people, and that time, the culture was referred to as Arab.

What does 'Arab mean?

This will help us to understand who these people were and what the land was. It will help us understand why the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ was sent among these people, why the Qur'aan was revealed in this language.

Etymologically, there are a variety of opinions. One of the basic understandings is that it refers to **something that runs and something that flows**.

Based upon this, there are various usages of the word in the language.

- **To speak clearly.** The Arabs believed that they spoke clearly. They called non-Arabs 'ajam meaning someone who does not speak, not that they are mute, but that when they speak, they are actually babbling and speaking gibberish. They believed their speech was superior because it flowed and ran unlike any other speech. The word *arab* is never used in the Qur'aan, but different forms of the word are used (e.g. *arabiyyun* = something that is Arab). The Messenger of Allaah ﷺ said when speaking about the technicalities of marriage:

Ath-thayab (a woman who has been married previously) *yu'rabu* (her own tongue will speak) *annahā* (on her behalf).

Similarly, the Arabs had an expression: *arabaniyyun lisaan* (= someone who speaks very clearly).

- **For something to be emotionally fulfilling.**
Allaah the Most High says when referring to the companions of Paradise (56, 36-37)

فَجَعَلْنَهُنَّ أَبْكَارًا ۝ ٣٦

And (We) made them virgins,

عُرُبًا أَتْرَابًا ۝ ٣٧

Devoted [to their husbands] and of equal age,

This literally means someone who is very loyal, a passionate lover. This is very emotionally filling and it is as if the person's emotions are flowing like the river.

A river or well that is overflowing would be described as '*arabatun*.

- **To have become chaotic or problematic.** If someone had indigestion they would use this term. Why? When a river or stream flows, the river may be beautiful, but it is very disorganized and chaotic. It is a beautiful, but controlled chaos.

These qualities combine to describe these people very well.

- They were very articulate in their speech and it could be argued they were the most articulate people.
- They were very passionate people. They had good qualities and had admiration for qualities such as *hilm* (to have forbearance, serenity) because they were rare among the Arabs – they were that passionate.
- They were a people largely chaotic without established governance, systematic economics, centralized religion. The primary factors uniting people were absent from this culture. That is what lead to much of the chaos. It was the religion that brought about these changes and contributed to the organization of these people to the point where they became the example of their time.

History of the Arabs

Ibn Kathir *rahimahu Allaah* discusses this at great length in his text. There is a lot of interesting material in this length, but this series focuses on a practical understanding of the life of the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ.

ANJ would like for us to understand the following. Genealogists divide the history of the Arabs into two primary categories.

1. Ancient Arabs (Perished Arabs).

These were the Arabs of '*Aad* and '*Thamud*. Not a lot is known about this group beyond the religious traditions.

2. Remaining Arabs (Migrated Arabs).

Those who were at the epicenter of the Arabian Peninsula during the life of the Messenger of Allaah.

a) Pure Arabs.

Ancient- and current-day Yemen. They had come to Hejaz from Yemen because of the economic hardship they had faced when a flood came in Yemen.

b) Arabized Arabs.

They are not Arab ethnically, but became Arab. This includes Isma'il '*alayhi as-salaam* and much of what we know today to be the Arab world. As Islam spread, the Arabic language and culture spread to the regions of today.

Why is this of such prudent detail?

The Messenger of Allaah ﷺ comes from the progeny of the Arabized Arabs.

Geography of Arabia

The Arabian Peninsula is a very interesting place.

From the northeast to the mid-to-northwestern region, it is completely surrounded by water; the list of water bodies if we proceed clockwise is

- Persian Gulf
- Strait of Hormuz
- Gulf of Oman



- Arabian Sea
- Gulf of Aden
- Red Sea

The northern region of the Peninsula borders the Ancient Areas of *Shaam* (Syria).

What can we learn from this?

There were two very interesting features to the Arabian geography.

1. It was very internal from a land perspective.

There is only one entrance into the Arabian Peninsula through land – through the Syrian desert. This would not be the easiest travel. It would be hundreds if not thousands of miles of severe, desert region. This made the region very isolated from the outside; in terms of language, culture, religion. The experience of being from Hejaz was very insulated from external factors and influences. It was a hotbed of deep cultural tradition and a treasure of linguistic nuances. There wasn't much desire to implant a government because it would be completely cut-off. For this reason, there weren't many foreign invasions.

2. It was a very external, exposed region of the world via sea.

It was a primary port for many trade routes to several regions of the world. It became an epicenter of trade and business because of its strategic location.

Political Situation of Arabia

For this we must look at the surrounding regions. We are talking about a time where there was synchronization between regional power and religious influence.

1. Yemen.

It had been a battling ground, a war-zone between the Jews and Christians for a long time. It is one of the few regions of the ancient Arab world, where Judaism had found a home. Judaism was rooted there, and the nearby region of Ethiopia and Eastern-Africa was predominantly Christian. These two religions had fought over the ruler-ship of Yemen for a very long time.

Close to the time of the birth of the Messenger of *Allaah* ﷺ, the Abyssinians had come in and captured Yemen. We will discuss this with the incident of the Elephants and Abraha.

Closer to the time of the beginning of revelation, there was an uprising from the Persian Empire. The idolatrous, polytheist tribes of Yemen had supported the Persians and were able to overthrow the Christian Abyssinian kingship. This brought the Persians into power via the local tribes.

The last of the Persian rulers (BadHaan) accepted Islam during the lifetime of the Messenger of *Allaah* ﷺ and most of Yemen became Muslim. The Messenger of *Allaah* ﷺ sent 'Ali b. Abi Taalib and Mu'adh b Jabal ﷺ to teach and spread Islam amongst the people of Yemen.

2. Heera.

Southern parts of current-day Iraq. This region had predominantly Persian influence which remained throughout the life of the Messenger of *Allaah* ﷺ. During the caliphate of 'Umar b. Al-Khattab ﷺ, the locals (local Arab tribes) were able to regain their region for themselves. Not even a year later, however, Khalid b. al-Walid ﷺ came at the helm of a Muslim army and overtook the region.

3. Shaam (Syria).

It predominantly had a Christian influence from the Roman Empire. This affected the northern regions of the Arabian Peninsula; the people were mostly Christian until the caliphate of 'Umar b. Al-Khattab رضي الله عنه, when the region came under the Islamic influence.

4. Pan-Arabian.

The Peninsula itself had no centralized form of government. There were certain influences leaking into the region, but primarily, the region was ruled by tribal law. These tribes were not centralized by any means, although there was some internal communication. The tribes were constantly at ends with each other because of the tribal mentality – personal conflicts too often became tribal conflicts.

Tribal law was different from kingship, but it had similarities. The chieftains were dictatorial-type leaders. Their rulings were often taken like that of a monarch. They could not and were not questioned, they were accepted regardless of anything else. The leadership was often inherited just like monarchy.

As a result of this corrupt governance, legal enforcement and preservation of civil liberties and rights were impacted. If you were wealthy, rich, influential, or related to the tribal leaders, you would survive well. If you were from any demographic that was not of relevance to or favorable for the tribal leaders, you would greatly suffer.

While we can say the region where the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ was born was chaotic, the Arabs that lived in regions bordering the great kingdoms of that time were often seen as inferior to the citizens of their bordering kingdoms. They did not enjoy the same rights as the citizens of those empires.

In the heart of the Arabian Peninsula, in Hejaz, the region was chaotic and could be seen as barbaric, but it was envied by the other Arabs because the people enjoyed complete autonomy. They had complete dignity and respect.

The rulers of Hejaz were not just seen as cultural, tribal, political, economic leaders, but as religious leaders. The leader of the tribe of Quraysh himself (Banu Qinaana) – the one whose decision would be final and would dictate the law of the land – was also seen as a servant, caretaker, and custodian of the Sacred House of *al-Ka'bah*. There would in fact be disputes within the tribe to see who would tend to the care of the Sacred house and who would serve water to the pilgrims visiting the Sacred House.

This shows the cultural roots and seeds of Islamic mode of contact and behavior.

Social Life of the Arabs

Arabian society was a very interesting mix of different social constructs coexisting at one time. Some of the negatives that existed at that time:

- **Lack of fair equal treatment of all members of society.**

Slavery was prevalent in the culture and was a practiced norm. This slavery was to treat a slave with less care than a camel or horse.

Women could be treated in two different ways.

- a) In certain social circles, women would be treated as subhuman – like a commodity traded from man-to-man. (We may later touch on the sexual exploitation of women.)
- b) The more elite of society held women in great esteem. They not only owned land, but great money and played a critical role in the politics of the region. Their opinions would be influential in decisions of the time. For example, Hind رضي الله عنها – the wife of Abu Sufyan رضي الله عنه and daughter of Utbah – dictated a lot of issues. She رضي الله عنها was a key instigator of the Battle of Uhud.

A woman's role primarily depended upon her position in society.

- **Money was inherited.**

As a result, a person born in a poor situation had little opportunity to better his situation.

- **Immorality/Injustice**

If you committed wrong to someone who was of higher social status than you, you would be killed.

If you committed wrong to someone who was of lower social status than you, you would probably get away with it.

- **Family, Modesty, Morals, Ethics**

For the elite, it was integral to the family experience. Marriage was treated as sacred. A man would propose, give a marriage gift. He would treat his wife with respect.

'Aaishah  narrates from the Messenger of Allaah  that four kinds of marriage existed in pre-Islamic Arabia.

The first was comparable to modern-day, Islamic marriage.

The second was that sometimes there was lack of fidelity; infidelity was a common trend and almost assumed or accepted between spouses.

The third was rampant fornication rather than marriage. A woman would almost fornicate with a said group of men and if pregnant, she would designate the child to a man and he would care for it.

The fourth kind of marriage (not even a kind of marriage as mentioned later in the narration) was rampant promiscuity to the level of prostitution. It would be known that people would go to these houses to commit adultery and attain the services of a prostitute. Children born of these women would live a life of disgrace, labeled as *waladu az-zina* and not claimed by a caretaker. The latter three forms of marriage (*nikaah* literally means to simply enjoy physical relations with a member of the opposite gender) were abolished by Islam and only the first form remains and has been polished and revered by Islam and is declared as the divine institution of marriage through Islam. [Paraphrased from Abu Daw'ud]

- **Emotional attachment to keeping the bonds of kinship**

This is an Islamic concept, but was found in Pre-Islamic Arabs. The deeper you went into nomadic life, the greater you found this dynamic. The relationships were treated as sacred.

- **The economic situation**

Trade and business was the primary form of making a living. Farming was found in some regions, but it was limited.

The Arabs did not have many natural resources so their trade and business was predominantly across borders.

Because of the tribal and political instability, their economics would often suffer. It was like a vicious circle that fed itself.

There was a lot of warfare and constant fighting.

Poverty and hunger were common trends of the time. Just like in the third-world today, there was literally no middleclass society; there would be the elite and the poor.

Some of the positives of the society:

- **Hospitality**

The second you traveled, you were instantly a guest. Any instability in your life immediately led you to being a guest. The conveniences we have today were not present then (no

supermarkets, hotels, etc.); thus, you became dependent upon another to provide these basic needs for you.

Some of the historians mention that hospitality was so much a part of their culture that it sometimes became their downfall. They may commit aggressions towards people (their own family) in the spirit of hospitality.

As well, rampant infidelity and promiscuity were part of hospitality. They would offer their own spouses to guests, find prostitutes for their guests. They would serve alcohol to their guests.

The etymologists note that *kareem* is a noble host and that it is from the same root as *karam* – a type of grapes fermented for wine. Wine extracted from grapes would be served to one's guests.

- **Sanctity of one's word**

There was no law, court, judge, legal system so a person's word was all they had to offer. If a person could not offer anything because of poverty, they could only offer their honour. If they gave their word to someone, they would kill to maintain it.

- **Sense of honour**

Idealistically, they were opposed to justice. They had the treaty to fight and strive to support people's rights (e.g. *Hilf'l-Fudul*).

- **Forbearance, Patience, Mildness, Composure, Serenity**

These qualities were admired because they were difficult to come across in such passionate people.

- **Simplicity**

There was extravagance and lavishness for the elite, but there was still simplicity to these people. A leader would sacrifice his own animal, skin it himself, cook the meat himself, serve it himself and he found dignity and honour in that. A leader would sit and speak amongst his people. During travel, the leader would sleep around the fire with his people.

Cultural Traditions of Arab Life

The people of Hejaz were predominantly illiterate or unlettered. Some historians note that there may have not even been 20 literate individuals in the city of Makkah during the time of the birth of the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ. In spite of this, the Arabs placed a great premium on knowledge. Knowledge was carried primarily through oral tradition.

Part of the reason for their being illiterate was that they were people of great memory and oral tradition. At the same time, this also contributed to their lack of need and urgency for developing the skills of reading and writing. Again, it was a vicious circle.

When certain people amongst them would travel the world and bring back knowledge (e.g. astrology, economy, trade, business, agriculture, farming, history, religions), they would make circles around these people to gain knowledge from them.

Genealogy was an expertise of the Arabs. By the age of four, a child could literally recite his only family tree for 20 generations. This was an obsession amongst them that they would even memorize and preserve the genealogy of horses. It was a science and knowledge for which they praised themselves.

We also know about the language, oratory, poetry and rhetoric skills of the Arabs. Battles would begin through displays of poetry and eloquence. They would not send warriors to begin the battles, but poets

to praise their own people and degrade the opponents. Poetry would also end wars. Tribes would pride themselves based upon their poets (i.e. celebrity status).

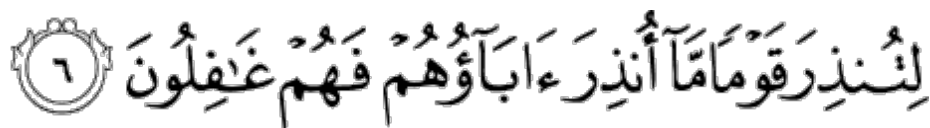
The tradition of *haji* bore similarities to the Islamic pilgrimage, but it was very different. It was a gathering where the Arabs would have poetry competitions. There was another occasion by the name of *Ukaaz* when all wars, battles would be put aside and all the greatest poets would gather at a place outside of Makkah. There, they would have poetry competitions. The leader of poetry would be crowned at that time. Poetry was the law of the land. This was why the primary miracle of the *Qur'aan* was its eloquence. Also, the Messenger of *Allaah* ﷺ was a very eloquent man – not a poet, but eloquent.

They also held the *Ka'bah* as a sacred place and would hang the most worthy poetry (given the title *Al-Mu'allaaqat* = the hung poems) on or near the *Ka'bah*.

May *Allaah* give us the understanding of everything that has been said and heard.

Pre-Islamic Society – Part II

Allaah told the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ (36, 6):



That you may warn a people whose forefathers were not warned, so (as a direct result) they are unaware (apathetic).

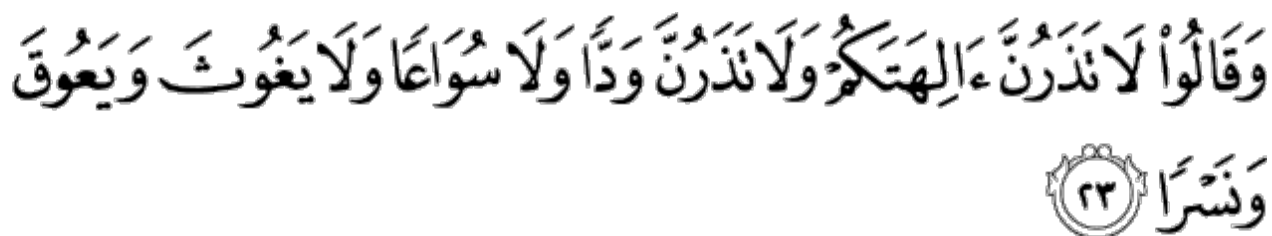
The Messenger of Allaah ﷺ was described as being *nidhaar*. It means to warn someone of imminent danger (a realistic, approaching threat) because of sincere and honest compassion and care for that person.

These people had been without spiritual awareness for a very long time. To process and understand the history of these people we must understand that monotheism was not new to this region. The prophets Hud, Thamud, and Saleh 'alayhum as-salaam were from this region as were their people. Isma'il 'alayhi as-salaam and his people were also along that path.

Idolatry

After some time, however, idolatry was introduced into this area. The man who brought idolatry to these people was 'Amr b. Luhayy. He was a leader of his tribe, cultured, and a traveler. He would travel widely to different civilizations. He went to Syria and found them worshipping certain idols. He brought back an idol to his people and told them that this is what the people there did and they claimed to be adhering to the previous prophets and were good, righteous people. Because he is a leader, his people followed and worshiped this idol.

From there, the spirituality of these people "grew" to make more and more idols. This goes to uncovering a historical gem of the Qur'aan. We are told in a narration in *Sahih al-Bukhaari* that 'Amr was led by a *jinn* to the area we know of today as Jeddah. He uncovered there five idols which the people of Nuh 'alayhi as-salaam used to worship. As Allaah the Most High says in (71, 23):



Never leave your gods and never leave Wadd or Suwa' or Yaghuth and Ya'uq and Nasr.

A question some people pose is why these five idols are mentioned by name in the Qur'aan?

1. They are idols which the Arabs would worship actively
2. They were among the first idols the Arabs began worshipping
3. These five idols were uncovered by 'Amr and he was told about them by a *jinn* and the very next *surah* is *Surat'l-Jinn*. It is intricate that after these five idols are mentioned, Allaah tells us about the *jinn*.

Nevertheless, monotheism was the beginning of this region, but paganism became widespread. Perhaps that led to their perverted worshipping of idols whilst believing in Allaah.

They believed *Allaah* was the supreme deity (they acknowledged Him, believed in Him, and worshipped Him), but they had erected idols to connect them with *Allaah* as intermediaries. *Allaah* the Most High describes this for us in (39, 3):

أَلَا لِلَّهِ الدِّينُ الْخَالِصُ وَالَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِهِ أَوْلِيَاءَ مَا
نَعْبُدُهُمْ إِلَّا لِيُقَرِّبُونَا إِلَى اللَّهِ زُلْفَىٰ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَحْكُمُ بَيْنَهُمْ فِي مَا هُمْ
فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي مَنْ هُوَ كَاذِبٌ كَفَّارٌ ﴿٣﴾

Unquestionably, for *Allaah* is the pure religion. And those who take protectors besides Him [say], “We only worship them that they may bring us nearer to *Allaah* in position.” Indeed, *Allaah* will judge between them concerning that over which they differ. Indeed, *Allaah* does not guide he who is a liar and [confirmed] disbeliever.

Furthermore, specific idols were worshipped by specific tribes and they thought each idol had its own influence.

- Wadd by Banu Kalb in Mura'
- Suwa' by Banu Hudhayl in Rihath (~3 day journey from Makkah)
- Yaghuth by Banu Ana' bi'l-Thay
- Ya'uq by Hamdaani people
- Nasr by Qabeelat Dhi'l-Kalaa'

Certain were idols were also more important than these little idols. These greater idols would be setup across the Arabian society and their would be mausoleums established around them – as if they were satellite locations of the main Ka'bah. For example, *Allaah* tells us in (53, 19-20)

أَفَرَأَيْتُمُ اللَّاتَ وَالْعُزَّىٰ ﴿١٩﴾

So have you considered al-Laat and al-'Uzza?

وَمَنْوَةَ الثَّالِثَةِ الْآخَرَىٰ ﴿٢٠﴾

And Manaaf, the third – the other one?

- Al-Laat was worshipped by the people of Thaqif near Ta'if
- Al-Uzza was worshipped at Nakhla (very near Makkah)
- Manaaf was worshipped at Yathrib by Aws and Khazraj
- Dhu'l-Khasla was worshipped by Ad-Daws (the sanctuary was called al-Ka'bah al-Yamaniyah; conversely, the Ka'bah in Makkah was called al-Ka'bah ash-Shaamiyah)
- Falas was worshipped by people of Tayr
- Ri'aam was worshipped at Himyar by people of Yemen
- Rada was worshipped by Banu Rabi'ah
- Dhu'l-Ka'baat was worshipped by people of Banu Bikir and Banu Thaghlib

The key point is that people were indulging. They were not randomly spreading, but were trying to replicate the same sacredness of the Ka'bah. There were hundreds of idols in the Ka'bah itself (>360 according to a narration by Imaam Ahmad *rahimahu Allaah*). They would even perform circumambulation around these satellite sanctuaries where they had their larger idols.

They would say that the Ka'bah was for Allaah, but these other gods needed second-tier sanctuaries. People could also make pilgrimages there and perform religious rites.

This was a total and complete spiritual deterioration among these people. This affected their daily practices. Evil omens and superstitions ran amuck. They attached spiritual value to things illegitimately. When the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ came Allaah condemned this practice in (5, 103):

مَا جَعَلَ اللَّهُ مِنْ بَحِيرَةٍ وَلَا سَائِبَةٍ وَلَا وَصِيلَةٍ وَلَا حَامٍ وَلَكِنَّ الَّذِينَ
كَفَرُوا يَفْتَرُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ الْكَذِبَ وَأَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ ١٠٣

Allaah has not appointed [such innovations as] *bahirah* or *sa'ibah* or *wasilah* or *ham*. But those who disbelieve invent falsehood about Allaah, and most of them do not reason.

Bahirah – taking a she-camel and considering her milk off-limits. It was solely designated for the idols.

Sa'ibah – she-camel let loose and nobody was allowed to touch it, sacrifice it, eat it, ride it, etc. It was marked to roam freely and be dedicated to the idols.

Wasilah – any offspring of the she-camel set free for the idols (*sa'ibah*) would also be dedicated to the idols

Ham – male-camel used for any work the idols needed e.g. carrying something for the idols, breeding with the *sa'ibah* to produce the *wasilah*

The Messenger of Allaah has told us that the very first one to institute the practices among the Arabs was also 'Amr b. Luhayy. The very first person to alter the religion of Isma'il 'alayhi as-salaam was 'Amr b. Luhayy. He is the one who came and erected the idols for worshipping. He is the first one to designate the *bahirah*, he was the first one to designate the *sa'ibah*, he was the first one to designate the *wasilah*, and he was the first one to designate the *ham*. [Ahmad]

Another unfortunate practice of the Pagan Arabs was that they would make gambles in order to reach decisions. They would launch marked arrows. Whichever struck the target would be the decision the gods had made for them.

They would also take a bird and release it for flight. Based upon its direction of flight, their decision would be determined.

Al-Maghrib comes from *gharb* meaning for something to vanish or disappear. The West is where the sun vanishes to. A crow is called *ghuraab* because they wished for it to vanish (it symbolized the coming of death).

They would also have soothsayers who would claim to have some skill to read your past and bless your future on behalf of the gods. This practice was very prevalent. That is why they first said that the Messenger of Allaah was a soothsayer, but Allaah clearly said in (69, 42)

وَلَا يَقُولُ كَاهِنٌ قَلِيلًا مَّا ذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٤٢﴾

[And it is] neither the word of a soothsayer; little do you remember.

Astrology

In other parts of the world, there was a small minority that was attached to astrology. This did not grow or gain influence in Arabia.

Abu Kabsha

He was a man among the Arabs. He had traveled to other regions of the world and found them to engage in astrology. He brought back this information to the Arabs and tried to present it to them. Particularly, he was advocating the worship of the star ash-Shi'raa. The Arabs, however, never accepted this belief system he was spreading. He was dismissed by the vast majority as a crazy person.

When the Messenger of Allaah came one of the early accusations against him was that he was *Ibn Abi Kabsha*. They had both asked the Pagan Arabs to stop worshipping everything except Allaah versus the Star. Allaah refutes them when He the Most High says in (53, 49)

وَأَنَّهُ هُوَ رَبُّ الشَّعْرَىٰ ﴿٤٩﴾

And that it is He who is the Lord of Ash-Shi'raa (Sirius).

Other Faiths

They had a presence in Arabian society, but it was very marginalized in Hejaz. For example, Christianity was very scattered. It was found in the Ghassanid Empire (of *Shaam*) as an extension of the Roman Empire. They were not a missionary people; they remained isolated. Tribes of Jews had migrated to the interior of the Arabian Peninsula. They were well-established themselves due to certain political and cultural reasons, but they were very introverted among themselves. They were pockets among the majority. They did not play a major part nor did they find acceptance of their faith among the people.

Keep in mind that the Christianity and Judaism of that time had also been perverted. As Allaah the Most High says in (5, 13-14)

فِيمَا نَقَضِهِمْ مِّثْقَهُمْ لَعْنَهُمْ وَجَعَلْنَا قُلُوبَهُمْ قَاسِيَةً
يُحَرِّفُونَ الْكَلِمَ عَنْ مَوَاضِعِهِ ۖ وَنَسُوا حَظًّا مِّمَّا ذُكِّرُوا
بِهِ ۖ وَلَا تَزَالُ تَطَّلِعُ عَلَى خَائِنَةٍ مِنْهُمْ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِنْهُمْ ۖ فَاعْفُ عَنْهُمْ
وَأَصْفَحْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿١٣﴾

So for their [the Children of Isra'il's] breaking of the covenant, We cursed them and made their hearts hard. They distort words from their [proper] usages and have forgotten a portion of that of which they were reminded. And you will still observe deceit among them, except a few of them. But pardon them and overlook [their misdeeds]. Indeed, *Allaah* loves the doers of good.

وَمِنَ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا إِنَّا نَصْرِي أَخَذْنَا مِيثَقَهُمْ فَنَسُوا
حَظًّا مِمَّا ذُكِّرُوا بِهِ، فَأَغْرَيْنَا بَيْنَهُمُ الْعَدَاوَةَ وَالْبَغْضَاءَ
إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَمَةِ ۚ وَسَوْفَ يُنَبِّئُهُمُ اللَّهُ بِمَا كَانُوا
يَصْنَعُونَ



And for those who say, "We are Christians", We took their covenant, but they forgot a portion of that of which they were reminded. So We caused among them animosity and hatred until the Day of Resurrection. And *Allaah* is going to inform them about what they used to do.

Monotheism

There were certain people, however, who held on to worshipping monotheistically.

Remnants of Past Prophets

There were some things that the Arabs were still doing right.

- **Idols answered back to *Allaah***
- **Sanctity of the Ka'bah in Makkah**

They would still visit the sites of pilgrimage. They would still observe a type of *hajj*. They still thought Safaa and Marwa were special. They respected the station of Ibrahim 'alayhi as-salaam.

But they twisted their reverence. They thought that if one was not from the Quraysh, there was something filthy about the person. Therefore, this outsider must adorn himself in the clothing of the Quraysh. This became a business opportunity. They would charge exorbitant amounts of money and if people could not afford the attire, they would circumambulate naked. They would whistle and clap during their rounds (as opposed to the *dhikr* of today).

They still served and cleaned the Ka'bah, served the *hujjaj*. Yet, there were civil wars to see who would take this responsibility.

The Quraysh were seen as the most superior people because of their local advantages to this sacredness.

What role did religion play in the lives of the Pre-Islamic Arabs?

We live in a widely agnostic society today. Religion still seems to some people as sacred and important and part of their identity, but it is overall marginalized in how people lead their lives. We as Muslims know that religion dictates our lifestyles and our conduct. Islam is central to everything.

In Pre-Islamic Arabian society, religion was completely marginalized. It had a symbolic, sacred value, but there were certain things in their lives that would cause them to change their religious values. As Allaah mentions in (9, 37)

إِنَّمَا النَّسِيءُ زِيَادَةٌ فِي الْكُفْرِ يُضِلُّ بِهِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا يُحِلُّونَهُ
عَامًا وَيُحَرِّمُونَهُ عَامًا لِيُوَاطِّئُوا عِدَّةَ مَا حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ فَيُحِلُّوا مَا
حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ زَيْنٌ لَهُمْ سَوْءٌ أَعْمَلِهِمْ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ
الْكَافِرِينَ



And for those

Indeed, the postponing [of restriction within sacred months] is an increase in disbelief by which those who have disbelieved are led [further] astray. They make it lawful one year and unlawful another year to correspond to the number made unlawful by Allaah and [thus] make lawful what Allaah has made unlawful. Made pleasing to them is the evil of their deeds, and Allaah does not guide the disbelieving people.

There were certain things in their religion to dictate major parts of their lives. If there were two tribes at war with each other, they could not technically fight in the sacred months. In order to continue the battle, they would delay the month to permit the fight in the sacred time. They were able to very conveniently alter religion to get what they wanted. The religion, in this way, was very marginalized and ceremonial.

It was a mockery of a mockery of religion. This can be expressed in some of the following narrations.

In *Musnad Ahmad*, there is a narration about a man by the name of As-Saaid b. Abdu Allah. He had constructed and carved an idol which his family and his tribe worshipped. He was responsible for its caretaking. To honour the idol, he would go to the dedicated camels and bring the milk of the *bahirah* and pour it on the idol as an offering. Later at night, dogs would come and lick the idol and drink all the milk. Then, they would urinate on the idol. This was observed by people and narrated.

Banu Hanifah was a tribe at that time. They made an idol out of *hays* (type of sweet people would eat akin to *halwa*). They would worship it until it would go bad, then they would make another. A drought hit their region. The people became so hungry and were suffering from such starvation that they went and ate their idol. A poet at that time saw the people eating their idol and said:

The people fo Hanifah ate their Lord in a time of severe starvation and drought.

They were not afraid of their Lord.

How pathetic was their following of their Lord

And how pathetic was their Lord that He could not protect Himself from them.

This was their spiritual decaying and deterioration. Yet, with the legacy of the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ they became the great people. Look at their transformation!

The Messenger of Allaah ﷺ was able to bring about this change because he would inspire the people. As Hassan b. Thaabit رضي الله عنه says about the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ:

*In more excellent than you, my eyes have never seen such a man.
No man has ever given birth to anyone more mazing than you.
You were created free from any shortcomings and faults.
It is as if you were created as you would have desired.*

Allaah the Most High says in (4, 174)

يَأَيُّهَا النَّاسُ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ بُرْهَانٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَأَنزَلْنَا إِلَيْكُمْ نُورًا
مُّبِينًا

O humankind, there has come to you a conclusive proof from your Lord, and We have sent down to you a clear light.

This was a time of complete darkness. There was no enlightenment, illumination of the heart. Allaah sent this Divine Message and His Messenger ﷺ as a light that would be clarifying and spreading such that it would illuminate everyone it touched (*Siraajan Munira*). He ﷺ was not at all a man that wished to prove himself superior to anyone. He ﷺ wanted light for people. He ﷺ presented the Qur'aan to people so that they could be transformed from the inside out.

May Allaah the Most High give us a proper understanding and realization of who the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ was and may Allaah grant us love of His Messenger ﷺ and a desire to follow in his path so that we may attain His ultimate pleasure.

Monotheism before Islam

Before Islam, in the Era of Ignorance, if we could not find a constructed idol to worship, we would put together some dirt into a mound. Then we would find a goat, milk it on top of that dirt-mound. Then we would begin circumambulating it.

This tells us several things.

- How badly deteriorated the spiritual condition of these people was.
- This is the predicament of the common person. They at least had inclination towards some level of spirituality – there was a type of *imaan*. They had not reached that reckless level of arrogance where they lost any and all spirituality.
- They were desperately looking for some thing. They did not know where to look for it and how to access it.
 - In the initial stages of the Messenger of Allaah's ﷺ calling, it was the lower part of society that would come forth to accept the revelation.
 - The chieftains had the arrogance of not being paired with a faith that was surrounded by the lower-levels of society.

What monotheism completely lost?

For the masses, yes. There were, however, a few people – known as *al-hunafah* – who were holding on to the religion of Ibrahim 'alayhi as-salaam.

Hanif | Word Analysis

The root of the word and its derivatives as used by the ancient Arabs will help us understand its meaning.

- They would say *rajulan ahnaf*.
Picture someone who has severely inwards turned feet (severe pigeon-footedness). Normally, when someone walks his feet point outwards. This person, however, has feet that constantly walk towards the middle. He is constantly centered.
- The word for a faucet or water tap is *hanafiyah*.
It streamlines or focuses the water's path.

Therefore, *hanif* is someone who is constantly focused.

In the supplication of Ibrahim 'alayhi as-salaam, an opening supplication of prayer. (Sahih Muslim):

...المشركين من أنا وما جنيتُها والأرض السموات فطر للذي وجهي وجهت

I have turned my face sincerely towards He Who has brought forth the heaven and the earth (from nothing), (I am) centered and I am not of those who associate others with the rights of Allaah.

There were perhaps a dozen individuals at the time of the birth of the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ who were called *hunafa* by the Qur'aan, *ahadith*, and the Arabs themselves.

Who were the hunafa?

There were few who actually interacted with the Messenger of Allaah. It is interesting to look at these examples because this was the last spark of *tawhid* on the earth at that time. Christianity and Judaism had become polluted by that time. The Trinity was rampant and rabbinical law was the law of the people.

Some of these persons came into contact with the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ before revelation and recognized the signs of prophethood. They expressed their desire to be with him when the message

arrived or they accepted the faith when it came. There were also some who held the essence of *tawhid*, but were too arrogant to associate with the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ.

1. Zayd b. 'Amr b. Nufayl

Ibn Ishaq *rahimahu Allaah* narrates from a narration going back to Asma b. Abi Bakr ؓ that, "I saw Zayd leaning against the Ka'bah and he was addressing the Quraysh. [He was a knowledgeable and respected, but eccentric elderly man].

He said, 'O people of Quraysh, I swear by the One Who has Zayd's life in His hands, none of you is truly upon the religion of Ibrahim other than myself.' And then he would say, "*Allaahuma*, if I knew what is the most beloved way of worshipping You, I would worship You in that manner. O *Allaah*, but there is very little left of Your true message today and I do not know what you want from me, but if I knew, I would do it."

Then, he would literally make *sajdah* there. He would come and pray near the Ka'bah in the direction of the Ka'bah. He would say, "My God is the God of Ibrahim. My religion is the religion of Ibrahim. That is all I know."

[Feeling spiritually connected in any shape or form, makes one feel the need for morality.

Morality or desire thereof may exist outside of spirituality, but that is short-lived or perverted.]

[If one goes through the motions of worship, but there is no impact upon his persona and being as a human, than he has not actually prayed.]

He would go around trying to save the first-born daughters of the middle-class to lower-class families from being buried (as a sacrifice to the gods). When he would find a man intending to go bury his newborn daughter, he would say, "Give her to somebody who may care for her. If she starts to find some place in your heart, please keep her. If you don't, give her up. I will take her."

Similarly, he was also very particular. He didn't want to indulge or sanction some of the very pagan practices. When they would sacrifice animals in the name of their idols, he would not participate. He would say, "I do not eat from that which you sacrifice for your idols. I do not eat except that which is sacrifice in the name of *Allaah*."

When they would have these feasts in the name of idols, he would come and reprimand them. He would say, "This goat you have sacrificed, *Allaah* has created it. *Allaah* rained down water from the sky for it. *Allaah* allowed vegetation to grow from the earth to nourish it. Then after all this process, you sacrifice this goat for other than *Allaah*?"

He passed away before revelation came, but the Messenger of *Allaah* ﷺ is narrated to have said, "That man will be resurrected on the Day of Resurrection as an *ummah* by himself. As the *ummah* that existed between me and between 'Isa b. Maryam *'alayhuma as-salaam*."

As we know from Ibn Kathir's *rahimahu Allaah* narrations, he was of the opinion that there were 500-odd years between the two messengers; other historians argue it was closer to 600-odd years. That long duration will have him resurrected on his own.

In another narration, the Messenger of *Allaah* ﷺ says that in one of his miracles he saw that, "I entered Paradise and I saw reserved for this man *dohatayn* (two HUGE trees)."

He had met the Messenger of *Allaah* ﷺ before prophethood, but passed away before the advent of revelation.

2. Waraqah b. Nawfal

Zayd b. 'Amr b. Nufayl travelled outside of Arabia, anywhere he could go, to find the true religion. During these travels, Waraqah b. Nawfal had been his companion. They were not comfortable with the spiritual condition of Makkah.

While travelling, he went on a different route. Zayd came across Christianity and Judaism, but was not comfortable with them. As a result, Zayd latched on to the religion of Ibrahim *'alayhi as-salaam*. Waraqah came across certain monks who were adhering to Christianity. They were practicing a slightly more old and clean version of Christianity. They were monks because they were disturbed by the polluted ideas of the Trinity et al.

He was the first one to translate the Bible into Arabic and bring it to the Hejaz region. He would literally, write and copy manuscripts of the Bible to distribute and teach among the people.

His key role was that he was the cousin of Khadijah b. Khuwaylid ؓ. When the first revelation came and the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ told his wife all that he had experienced, she took him to her cousin who knew some things about scriptures and prophets.

Waraqah told them, "If he speaks the truth (about this Angel), it is the same Angel that would come to Musa *'alayhi as-salaam*. If he is sent out to preach his message by Allaah and I am still alive, I will not only believe in him, but I will fully support him and help him in his message." For this reason, he is often classified as Muslim.

3. Qoos b. Sa'ida al-lyyadi

Iyyad was a tribe. When the convoys came to the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ to accept Islam and learn about the religion, one of the tribes came from his tribe. When this tribe came, the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ asked them if they knew about this man.

They mentioned to the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ that he passed away. He ﷺ said, "I saw him one day at the place of Ukaaz." This was a place outside of Makkah where the Pagans would have fanfare (poetry and idol worship). "He was riding a red she-camel. He was speaking some words that were very astonishing and deep. I don't remember what he was saying, but just that it was so profound."

One of the people of the caravan said that he remembered what Qoos would say. He would say, "O people gather together, everyone who dies, then that person has perished. But every single thing will come back later."

He is basically saying that everything we do in this world has a consequence.

"The night is very dark and deep, but has huge forts (shining stars), but at the same time we have the ocean raging with waves and mountains deeply rooted in the earth and streams flowing in the earth. In the sky there is a huge reflection and call for us."

"Why is it that I see people go, but they do not come back? Do they become so happy with where they have gone that they do not return? Or do they know the truth, but have simply fallen asleep?"

"I take an oath by Allaah in which there is no doubt, verily for Allaah there is a *din* and that *din* which Allaah has deserved and it is more pleasing to Him than what you are practicing."

He would read this poetry and use it to advise the people.

4. Umayyah b. Abi as-Salat

The Messenger of Allaah ﷺ said that Umayyah was very close to accepting Islam.

In another narration, the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ said that Umayyah was very close to accepting Islam by his poetry. Meaning, his poetry was oozing with *imaan*.

It is said that he was a practitioner of the Christian faith, but would write poetry about *tawhid*. So he followed a pure form of Christianity. He would speak about resurrection on the Day of Judgment – very anti-Arab practice and belief.

He was also a giant of poetry during his time. He lived until the time of revelation, but he did not accept Islam because of arrogance. He could not listen to this young man ﷺ whilst he was a much elder, learned, and respected man.

Many of the scholars of *tafsir* say that Allaah the Most High spoke about him in (7, 175)

وَأْتَلُ عَلَيْهِمْ نَبَأَ الَّذِي ءَاتَيْنَاهُ ءَايَاتِنَا فَانْسَلَخَ مِنْهَا فَاتَّبَعَهُ
الشَّيْطَانُ فَكَانَ مِنَ الْغَاوِينَ

And recite to them, [O Muhammad], the news of him to whom we gave [knowledge of] Our signs, but he detached himself from them; so Satan pursued him and he became of the deviators.

This man could look at the sky and recognize something profound, he could hear the *Qur'aan* and recognize the truth in it, but he literally extracted himself from that guidance (*fansalakha*). He was very conscious of removing himself from guidance. He then lived a life in complete dissolution.

He died in either 2 AH or 9 AH, but he did not accept Islam. He realized there was some truth, however, and wrote a poem memorializing the people who died in the Battle of Badr and what would transpire of them in the Hereafter.

5. Labid b. Rabi'ah al-'Aamiri

He was also a giant of poetry. He received the distinct honour of that time for his poetry – his poems would be hung in and around the Ka'bah.

The Messenger of Allaah ﷺ said about him, "Some of the truest words a poet has spoke were the words of Labid."

This phrase is quoted by scholars from past to present

باطل الله خلا ما شيء لئلا
Verily, every single thing other than Allaah is *baatil*.

Baatil | Word Analysis

It is the antonym of *haqq* (meaning something on solid foundation). This is something that is not on solid foundation. That is why it is used in the *Qur'aan* to mean that which is falsehood. This will all be gone tomorrow, but Allaah will and is always in existence.

This is very in line with when Allaah says in (55, 26-27)



The Messenger of Allaah ﷺ said, "The most true words said by a poet were the words of Labid."

He accepted Islam and died much later during the caliphate of 'Uthman b. Affan ؓ.

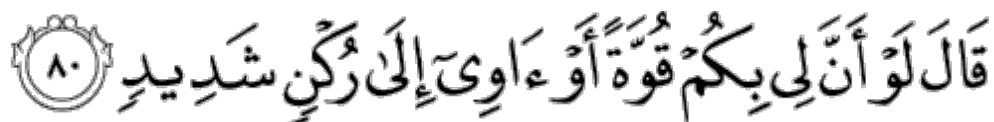
Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani *rahimahu Allaah* and others mention that he ؓ lived to the age of 150! He had a lot of experience and deep profound wisdom.

Other Noteworthy Names

- **Ka'b b. Luayy b. Ghaalib al-Qurashi**
He is a great-great-great-grandfather of the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ. He adhered to *tawhid* during a time that was predominantly attached to *shirk*.
- **'Amr b. Abasa As-Sulaami**
Allaah honoured him by giving him Islam.
- **Abd'l-Muttalib (by some scholars)**
We will see this in the incident of the Elephants
At the Battle of Hunayn, the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ cried out, "I am the Messenger of Allaah and this is not a lie. I am the (grand-) son of Abd'l-Muttalib." The fact that the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ linked himself to this man indicates there must have been some true faith in his life.

Family History of the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ

The scholars mention that when Lut '*alayhi as-salaam* experiences the difficult situation of having the angelic guests and his immoral people are advancing. He '*alayhi as-salaam* says (11, 80)



He said, "If only I had against you some power or could take refuge in a strong support."

He '*alayhi as-salaam* is wishing that he could have some family support – that strong support.

The Messenger of Allaah came from a very blessed and prestigious lineage. While slowly finding value based upon your family is spiritually superficial, there is some value in it. It provides credibility when speaking to others who had this value of superficiality and it provides one with support. Look at the example of Abu Taalib.

The Messenger of Allaah ﷺ says, “Allaah selected Kanana from the children of Isma’il, then He selected the Quraysh from the Kanana, then from the Quraysh He chose Banu Haashim, then He chose me from Banu Haashim.”

Meaning, he ﷺ has been selected from the best of the best of the best.

In another narration, he ﷺ says, “The day when Allaah created the creation, He put me amongst the best of people. Then when Allaah distributed the people further, He put me in the better of the two. Then when He distributed them further, He put me in the best of tribes. Then when He distributed people into homes from their tribes, He put me in the best of homes. That is why I come from the best of lineages and from the best of homes.”

Remember when Abu Sufyan was put before the Emperor of Rome and asked about the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ and any ulterior motives he ﷺ may have for his messengership, Abu Sufyan said, “No, he comes from a very great lineage.”

A beauty of the religion is that the lineage of the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ is preserved up until Adam *'alayhi as-salaam*.

- **Portion A**
This is unanimously accepted.
- **Portion B**
There are some differences of opinion regarding the names here and there, but it is still documented.
- **Portion C**
This is after Ibrahim *'alayhi as-salaam*, which is much accepted.

People have this lineage memorized, but they do not have their own lineage memorized.

May Allaah allow us the reality of who he ﷺ was. May Allaah allow us true love of His Messenger ﷺ. May Allaah give us the ability to practice everything that was said and heard.

History of Zamzam

The legend of 'Abd'l-Muttalib was established and solidified by two major events in his life. This was his lasting legacy.

- I. Re-digging of the well of zamzam (prologue to the birth of the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ)
- II. Invasion of the Army of the Elephants

The Re-Digging Itself

Most of us are aware about the story of the Prophet Isma'il and his mother Hajer '*alayhuma as-salaam*. The baby was thirsty and they were in a valley with no vegetation. The mother began making rounds (immortalized in the acts of *sa'l* for *umrah* and *hajj*) to find something for her child. Then, by the grace of Allaah a fountain of water flowed from near the area the foot of the baby had been thrashing at on the ground.

This spring was not just a spiritually symbolic thing. It defined the political, economic and social development of the region. The place was now habitable.

The people of Yemen were leaving their areas (first because of starvation and economic oppression) and found this inviting region. Then, the second exodus of the Yemeni people happened. These people were also attracted to Hejaz.

People settled here. Centuries pass, but somewhere along the lines (it is not very clear who, but they attribute it to the tribe of Jurhum) someone stole the well. There was civil war because families and tribes were disputing over the well of zamzam. One tribe came and put their weapons over the well and buried it so that it was not recoverable. Years became decades and centuries and people even forgot about the well.

At the time of 'Abd'l-Muttalib, the people had heard what they presumed were myths about this well with sweet water that would never run out. One day, 'Abd'l-Muttalib goes home and lays down and in his dream something came to him.

Many of the scholars have not shied away from saying that this may have been Angel communicating with this noteworthy individual. It was inspired to him like it was to the mother of Musa '*alayhi as-salaam*.

The thing told him to go and dig up *tiba* (that thing which is very attractive). He asked it, "What is *tiba*?", but it left.

The next day the thing came back to 'Abd'l-Muttalib. It told him, "Go and dig up *baara*' (the very blessed thing)." He asked it, "What is *barra*'?", but it left.

The third day he went to sleep again and it came to him. It told him, "Go and dig up *mad-duna* (= something that is coveted)?" He asked it, "What is *mad-duna*?" but it left.

The fourth night when he went to sleep this being came back to him. It told him, "Go and dig up *zamzam*." He asked it, "What is *zamzam*?" It answered, "*Zamzam* is that thing which will never run out and its water is always abundant. It can give water to the most largest group of people that are visiting. It is between *al-farath* and *ad-dam*." This is a figure of speech of the Arabs to mean something that is very pure.

It is the same phrase that is used to describe the milk, which runs between the blood and feces of the cow. That is a compound miracle! It is using an idiom of the Arabs to highlight a scientific miracle. Whoa!

You will find it. Look for it where you will find ant hills. There you will find many crows pecking there beaks into the ground.

'Abd'I-Muttalib goes to this place with his son al-Haarith. They begin digging and unearth certain things. They come across swords made of gold and silver with jewels. Then, they begin to unearth bricks of gold, gold coins, silver coins. Then, they find themselves to be knocking on top of a well.

They begin screaming *takbir*. People begin to congregate and realize something is going on. They realize that this is the myth of the well. The chieftains of other tribes come up and say, "This is the well of our forefather, Isma'il. Slow down 'Abd'I-Muttalib. If this is his well, then we all have a right to dig this up."

This is a source of pride and everyone wants their hands in it. 'Abd'I-Muttalib says, "This was informed to me directly. I was inspired where this well was. This is my responsibility and I will take care of it."

He is a very generous and kind man, but he was a wise man.

The people continue to fight and argue. They say there is an old man (some narrations say he is a soothsayer) and that man will make the decision between them. They travel to that person.

Some narrations mention that along the way, the people become very thirsty and cannot find any water. People begin to fall ill and they are in a crisis situation. This was a common occurrence for desert-life. The norm was to dig their own graves because they did not wish to put the weight upon another. When they would feel exhaustion, they would lay inside of it and wait for death to come to them.

Some of them are fading in and out of consciousness. 'Abd'I-Muttalib passes out for some time, but awakes. He awakes everyone and says that he has a feeling that water is not too far. They all rise and begin to move forward as difficult as it is.

'Abd'I-Muttalib races forward and when he reaches a spot he kicks his animal so that its feet hit the ground. Water, a stream of water, gushes forth. The people begin digging there and they unearth an amazing well.

These people realize that the one who showed him where this well was must have been the one who showed him where the well of *zamzam* was. He was given full custodianship of the well. They return to Makkah. 'Abd'I-Muttalib and his sons solidify the boundaries of the well and it was established.

He recited some poetry at this point:

*O Allaah, You are the King and the One Worthy of Praise
My Lord, My Master, You are the One Who creates and You are the One Who brings back
You are the One Who gives strength and steadfastness and from You comes wealth and from You
comes starvation/poverty.*

*If You wish, You inspire as You will to give that person knowledge of where treasure or wealth is buried.
So today show to me what You wish for me to do.*

This was basically his supplication for guidance. This is another evidence used to show that 'Abd'I-Muttalib was a *hanif*.

What did he do with the gold and silver? He melted it all and build a door for the Ka'bah from it. He is of the first to adorn the Ka'bah in such an elaborate manner – from his love, respect, and affection for that sacred sanctuary.

It stayed under the guardianship of Banu Haashim going from 'Abd'l-Muttalib to Abu Taalib. They would very seriously, physically and financially serve the *hujjaj*. They would arrange for the serving and containers. It was an investment.

The first year that Abu Taalib was responsible for it, he went bankrupt. We will learn later that he was an amazing man. He was not a wealthy man, but his personality was averse to making extravagant amounts of money.

In the second year, Abu Taalib went to his brother 'Abbas  and asked for a loan to arrange for the visiting *hujjaj*. He is given 10 000 silver coins.

In the third year, Abu Taalib again had no money. He again went to his brother 'Abbas  who said that he would take care of the debts, but Abu Taalib was to sell him the rights to the well of *zamzam*. Eventually, 'Abbas  accepted Islam and after his death, the responsibility was given to 'Abdu Allaah b. 'Abbas , then to 'Ali b. 'Abdu Allaah b. 'Abbas , then to Daw'ud b. 'Ali, then to Sulayman b. Daw'ud, then to 'Isa b. Sulayman. Eventually this was inherited by the khalifa, al-Mansur. From there, it was passed between leadership (in the Umayyad dynasty) rather than ancestry.

Significances of zamzam

1. It will fulfill whatever intention you have (i.e. when drinking it)
2. When you drink it, say the name of *Allaah*, drink it in three breaths, drink it to your fill and then praise *Allaah*. The difference between the believers and the hypocrites is that they do not drink to their fill with *zamzam*.

A difference between belief and hypocrisy is conviction versus skepticism. A believer will believe them for whatever he needs because he has trust that *Allaah* is true in His promise. That person will be enthusiastic about it and will exhaust the opportunity. This was a tool the Messenger of *Allaah*  gave us to reflect upon our behavior.

3. Imaam al-Bayhaqi *rahimahu Allaah* mentions that 'Abd'l-Muttalib said, "O *Allaah* I do not allow someone to use this for washing themselves." Even he had the understanding that this water had some spiritual significance to it.
"Rather I permit them to drink it and it is a cure for the one who drinks it."
 4. It was a blessing foretelling the coming of a greater blessing. It was unearthed a few years before the birth of the Messenger of *Allaah*  by his very grandfather who not only cared for him, but also named him .
- It first came into existence through the legacy of Ibrahim '*alayhi as-salaam*. This minor legacy was a sign of the unearthing of the true and real legacy of Ibrahim '*alayhi as-salaam – tawhid*.

Invasion of the Army of the Elephants

This should be told at the end, but ANJ will mention it now. The Messenger of *Allaah*  was born in the same year as the year of this invasion. The most substantial of historical accounts says that he was born two months after this invasion.

The Political Landscape

At the time of the Messenger of *Allaah*'s  birth there was a great amount of political turbulence.

Yemen had been very deep in idolatry, but had been impacted by Christianity from the Abyssinians. There had been a Jewish overtaking of the area. Many narrations mention that the incident of *ashab'l-ukhdud* (mentioned in *Surat'l-Buruj*) was the incidence of persecution of that time. The Abyssinians were

very offended by this and sent an Abyssinian to Yemen, not to conquer the region, but to free the Christian people from tyranny. The land was then to be returned to the oppressed Christian people of Yemen.

When the Christians won their freedom back from the Jews, the ruler was Irbath. Abraha was a general in his army and unsatisfied with his method of ruling. Irbath was first and foremost a Christian and he was ruling over secondly. He did not have a great understanding of economics and political stabilization. He was instead a very devout Christian. Irbath had been put into this position because the situation had been seen as a spiritual uprising.

On the other hand, Abraha was a strategist. He led a coup against Irbath, killed him and overtook the rulership.

Abraha wished to regain the glory and return to the old days of Yemeni glory. The drought and starvation had left the region ravaged. Everyone had gone to Hejaz or Yathrib. Makkah had become the metropolitan center.

Abraha wished to regain the glory for Yemen. He was not a good man by any means. He killed his own ruler. Note, however, he did not have his eyes set on destructing the Ka'bah. Historical accounts by Ibn Kathir *rahimahu Allaah* indicate that Abraha was a genius and he had a very patient manner with people. Any time he came across the Arabs and their tribes, he would engage in profound discussion with them. He listened to 'Abd'l-Muttalib when he came to visit – he was not blood thirsty.

Plan A

Realize that their spirituality played a large in their lifestyles – even if in a perverted manner. They were not completely apathetic, but they had a lack of respect because of their lack of grounding in tradition. For this reason, Abraha's Plan A had been to attract business. He needed to attract people to Yemen. He realized people were still very spiritual in their own way. As such there must be a similar attraction for people (like the Ka'bah).

He is Christian so he builds a church. He builds a palace of a church and names it Qulays. It had all the resources which were available to the people. He forced his people to build the church so much so that if somebody did not show up to the construction site after the sun had risen, Abraha would cut that person's hand off. His plan had been to build a place that rivaled the Ka'bah so that people would consider visiting it. From his perspective, he has not done anything wrong.

Then, he sends a message to the Christian Abyssinian King (Najashi). "I have built a church and have dedicated it to you. I want to bring honor and dignity back to our Christian people in this Christian land. I will not rest with the construction of this church until I am able to bring more people here than the number of people who visit the Ka'bah in Makkah."

The Reaction

Word of his message spreads to the Arabs. Obviously, they are not very happy. A man from Banu Kanana goes to the Qulays, waiting until it has closed and it is dark. Then he defecates in the church. One narration by Ibn Kathir *rahimahu Allaah* mentions that the man takes the mass and smears it on the walls.

It is an appalling incident. This is brought to the attention of Abraha and he is upset because this was his personal project. That man in the meanwhile proudly spreads word to people about what he has done.

The Plan for Attack

Abraha takes an oath: "I will not rest until I have destroyed the Ka'bah." He rallies support, gathers troops. The highest of narrations says he gather 60 000 troops and marches towards Makkah. He does one last thing. Remember Yemen has that connection to Abyssinia – to Africa. He recruits a man by the

name of Unays – an elephant hunter. He asks for anywhere between 9-15 elephants. He wants to strike fear into the hearts of the people.

We understand it to be a very strategic decision to flatten the land. At the same time, it is fear striking for the hearts of the Arabs because they have never seen anything like it.

Lesson

Abraha was a very arrogant, but revolutionary and intelligent leader. He is very motivated and driven to live up to the many promises he has made.

We know him as the poor, foolish individual who attempted to attack *bayt Allaah*, but that was not how he began. He was not out rightly malicious. He became angry. Several people died in defense of the Ka'bah and several people from his own army died. How did he get to the point where he was solely responsible for the death of thousands of people?

It took someone who was immature and foolish and thought that an act of devotion to his own religion was to violate someone else's religion. Right or wrong, that is secondary. He disrespected someone else's belief system. He behaved like an animal and that is what drives Abraha mad. History is full of lessons and this is a lesson that disagreeing is a different matter, stating the truth is an obligation, but there is a line that ought not be crossed.

Allaah says in (6, 108)

وَلَا تَسُبُّوا الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ فَيَسُبُّوا اللَّهَ عَدَوًّا بِغَيْرِ
 عِلْمٍ كَذَلِكَ زَيْنًا لِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ عَمَلُهُمْ ثُمَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ مَرْجِعُهُمْ فَيُنَبِّئُهُمْ
 بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٠٨﴾

And do not insult (say vile things) those who invoke other than Allaah, lest they insult Allaah in enmity (out of retaliation) without knowledge. Thus, we have made pleasing to every community their deeds. Then to their Lord in their return and He will inform them about what they used to do.

You may be cursing something made of wood, but they are disrespecting the Lord of the Worlds because you disrespected their belief system. Look at how linked the *Qur'aanic* injunction is to incidents even before its revelation and the birth of its Messenger.

May Allaah give us the ability to practice everything that was said and heard.